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New York

President:	Nana Effah-Apenteng	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. Pereyra Plasencia
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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06-47530 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Norway, Pakistan and the Sudan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gillerman (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 August 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2006/670 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council being held on Tuesday, 22 August 2006 regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation, under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in the course of its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Gambari: Last Friday, the Secretary-General reported on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (see S/2006/670). The Council has been regularly briefed on the situation in Lebanon and northern Israel. Indeed, the Secretary-General's Envoys, Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar, are today concluding meetings in Israel, after earlier consultations in Lebanon, as part of the process of preparing the report requested by the Council in paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). Today's briefing will therefore be focused on the Palestinian issue. In the light of the emphasis, in paragraph 18 of resolution 1701 (2006), on the need for comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions — starkly highlighted by events of the last two months — it is necessary, in our view, to step back from the events of the past month and consider the state of the peace process in the region in the light of the developments of the past year. For that reason, I will not report in detail on the events of the past month alone, serious as they have been.

This time last year, Israel was disengaging from Gaza and part of the northern West Bank. Led by the Quartet, the international community was working to ensure that that step would lead the parties back to the road map, and to the revival of the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory. Sadly, those hopes have not been fulfilled. Far from advancing towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, we have seen that vision slip further away during the past year. There are, in our opinion, several reasons for that unfortunate development.

The first is the political positions and actions of the parties. While President Abbas remains firmly committed to his platform of peace, the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, appointed pursuant to the 25 January elections, has not fully committed itself to the basic principles of the peace process: non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements. Although factional tensions persist, a broad spectrum of political and other Palestinian forces are currently engaged in a dialogue to put in place a national unity Government with a new programme. In the meantime, while efforts to strengthen Palestinian border management and the security services that fall under the purview of the President continue, the Palestinian reform agenda is largely frozen, and with it Palestinian compliance with road map obligations.

On the Israeli side, the coalition Government has stated a readiness to commence negotiations if the Palestinian Authority accepts the basic principles of the peace process and implements road map obligations. But Israel has not transferred approximately $500 million it owes to the Palestinian Authority under the Paris Protocol, and has itself failed to implement road map obligations, including the freezing of settlement activity and the removal of outposts. Meanwhile, it has been planning for the future based on unilateral moves to disengage from parts of the West Bank while consolidating Israeli presence in other parts.

The second measure of the stagnation of the peace process is the degradation of the Palestinian Authority, the most tangible symbol of Palestinian hopes for statehood, as well as of Israeli hopes for a viable partner. The Palestinian Authority was already facing serious difficulties at the end of 2005. While the international community praised aspects of the Palestinian Authority's response during the disengagement process, the Authority's performance in the months following disengagement was at best mixed. The wage bill continued to grow as the Palestinian Authority recruited more officers into the security forces, security in Gaza deteriorated, and rocket attacks on Israel continued.

By December of last year, key donors were reconsidering their support to the Palestinian Authority's budget, which was already depleted. The Authority's domestic revenues have plunged further since the January elections. The cumulative worth of value-added-tax transfers collected by Israel but withheld from the Palestinian Authority will be between $480 and $560 million by next month. Palestinian Authority workers, who support a third of the Palestinian population, have received only a fraction of their salaries over the past six months. Absenteeism in some areas of the civil service has now reached over 40 per cent.

Restrictions on movement mean that the Palestinian Cabinet has actually never met in one place, and that ministers are confined either to Gaza or to the West Bank. Moreover, several cabinet members, including the deputy Prime Minister, and now both the Speaker and the Secretary-General of the parliament, are in Israeli detention. Other ministers are in hiding or abroad, leaving ministries without policy direction and creating disillusionment among the managers and employees who remain at their posts.

Several ministry buildings in Gaza have been damaged by Israeli shelling. Ministries increasingly resort to United Nations assistance for fuel, transport support and office equipment. As an indicator of the deteriorating position of the Palestinian Authority, no annual budget was published for the year 2006. The Hamas Government's approach to running ministries — for example, its promotion of Hamas members into senior civil service positions — may have also contributed to disillusionment. There have also been constant tensions between the presidency and the Government over the security services.

Mechanisms such as the Temporary International Mechanism and the consolidated appeal of the United Nations itself have been put in place to ensure that basic goods and services are delivered and that minimum cash payments are made to the needy. But those mechanisms cannot replace the Palestinian Authority. They do not generate economic growth and they do not provide hope for Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority has shown major weaknesses in the past on security and on fiscal management. But today its capacity to deliver is in rapid decline. The continuation of that trend could lead to the collapse of a key provider, stabilizer and interlocutor in the region, to say nothing of Palestinian hopes for a Palestinian State.

A third measure of the state of the peace process is the most terrible of all, that is, suffering, destruction and death from violence. Israeli land, air and sea operations, despite being said to be aimed at militants or military targets, have killed large numbers of

civilians, including many children, and have caused heavy damage to civilian infrastructure such as private homes, bridges and power plants — particularly in Gaza, where violence is a daily fact of life. In the West Bank, too, Israeli incursions are a regular occurrence, particularly in Nablus and Jenin, often causing fatalities.

There have also been several Palestinian suicide attacks in Israeli cities over the past 12 months. The last was in April, but Israeli authorities report that they have foiled many other attempted operations. Israeli civilians living in towns and kibbutzes near Gaza have endured regular Qassam rocket attacks. No Israeli civilians have yet been killed by those rockets since disengagement, but there have been injuries. If the attacks continue, it will only be a matter of time before there are fatalities.

The cycle of attack and counter-attack only leads to increased human suffering, which is intolerable, on all sides. As an illustration, in the past year a total of 41 Israelis have been killed, and nearly 480 injured, by Palestinian violence. In the same period over 450 Palestinians have been killed, and over 2,500 injured, by Israeli violence. One hundred and ninety of those deaths occurred since the capture of Corporal Shalit, on 25 June, meaning that the rate of Palestinian casualties is comparable to the rate during Operation Defensive Shield, at the height of the second intifada.

Meanwhile, no progress has been made in securing the release of Corporal Shalit, despite calls for his unconditional release. His parents have not even received a "sign of life", which is the least his captors could provide. Nor have the long-standing efforts of President Abbas to secure Palestinian prisoner releases yet borne fruit, despite his unrelenting efforts.

A fourth reason for the lack of progress towards a negotiated two-State solution is the creation of facts on the ground that would appear to prejudice final-status issues. Settlement activities continue, with some 3,000 units reportedly under construction within existing settlements. And despite several statements of intent which have been reported to the Security Council, unauthorized settlement outposts have not been dismantled.

The barrier, large parts of which are on occupied Palestinian territory, is now 51 per cent complete, despite the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Once it is finished, in addition to the 180,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem, approximately 60,500 West Bank Palestinians will reside in areas between the barrier and the Green Line, with restricted access to health, education and employment services in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In East Jerusalem, the combination of settlement activity, including in the E-1 area, barrier construction and other administrative measures points to the encirclement of the city that is intended to serve one day as the capital of two States, while effectively dividing the West Bank into two separate geographical areas.

A fifth measure, in our opinion, is the economic situation, since development is a building-block of peace. The impoverishment in the Palestinian territories is more severe now than it has ever been, including during the period at the height of the second intifada. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, some 70 per cent of Palestinians are living below the poverty threshold, and 85 per cent of the population in Gaza is currently receiving food aid. One simple indicator of increasing Palestinian desperation is the fact that the number of applicants to the emergency job creation programme of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has doubled since December 2005.

The single biggest impediment to Palestinian economic growth, according to the World Bank, is the closure regime. The number of Israel Defense Forces-manned and unmanned physical obstacles in the West Bank has increased by 43 per cent since Israel's disengagement from Gaza, despite the terms of the Agreement on Movement and Access, which are designed to achieve exactly the contrary. Meanwhile, the Rafah and Karni crossings have been only partially operational, at rates far lower than foreseen under the Agreement on Movement and Access, in the light of Israeli security concerns. Although the recent trends have been positive, at least for imports, our monthly reports show that, during 2006, less than 10 per cent of Gaza's minimum daily export targets under the Agreement have been achieved. Rafah has been closed for all but two days of the past seven weeks, preventing people from leaving or entering Gaza. Thousands of Palestinian expatriate workers, who had come home for family visits, are at risk of losing their visas and jobs if they are not allowed to leave Gaza to return to the

countries where they work. Other aspects of the Agreement on Movement and Access, including the Gaza West Bank link and progress on the airport and seaport, are dormant.

The sixth measure of the state of the peace process is perhaps the most worrying development of the past year, difficult to quantify but easy to discern. It has been in the attitudes of ordinary women and men. Opinion polls suggest a woeful decline in confidence in the peace process and in the prospects for a negotiated settlement on both sides. This trend, already plain before the recent conflict between Hizbollah and Israel, may well have been strengthened by it. Few people on either side believe that an end to the conflict is in sight. On one side, the result could well be further radicalization and support for violence and terror, while, on the other, it could well be support for harsh and excessive military action and unilateral measures. Positions may thus be hardening, and they could harden further unless a credible political process is somehow revived.

I have described the reality of the peace process today by seeking to describe what has actually happened in the past 12 months. I have given reasons why, in our view, we have reached this sorry juncture in the Middle East peace process so that we can reorganize and address the challenges ahead of us all. The purpose is not to assign blame; no useful purpose is ever served by that. I also recognize fully that making peace is not easy. But the absence of a credible political horizon, while in large part a consequence of decisions, actions and inaction by the parties themselves, is also partly a cause of some of those decisions, those actions and that inaction. We must also remind ourselves, as the Group of Eight stated at its summit in July, that the absence of a comprehensive solution is the root cause of the region's problems. Progress towards a two-State solution would undoubtedly facilitate the resolution of conflicts elsewhere in the region, and vice versa.

The stalled state of the peace process should therefore be regarded as unacceptable, both on its own merits and because of its broader regional implications. There are many concrete steps, some immediate, which need to be taken in order to get out of the current crisis and back towards a political path. As the Secretary-General stressed on 11 August, something more is needed: a renewed international effort in which the various crises in the region are addressed not in isolation and not bilaterally, but as part of a holistic and comprehensive effort, sanctioned and championed by the Security Council, to bring peace and stability to the region as a whole. The tragedy we have witnessed in the last month should, in our view, be converted to an opportunity to take prompt, concerted action by all parties to resolve the problems and issues in the region, which have confronted us, without resolution, for far too long.

The President: I thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are strongly urged to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his thorough presentation.

Argentina notes with satisfaction that the parties are generally complying with the cessation of hostilities called for in resolution 1701 (2006). However, the incidents that occurred on 19 August demonstrate that the situation continues to be extremely fragile and underscore the need for the parties to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from taking measures that could affect the delicate balance achieved after intensive negotiations.

As the Secretary-General has said, the Israeli operation in the Bekaa valley last Saturday constitutes a violation of the cessation of hostilities. Regrettably, Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continue, in contravention of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and other decisions of the Security Council.

We would like to recall that all States, and in particular the neighbours of Lebanon, have an obligation to fully comply with the arms embargo established in resolution 1701 (2006). Any transfer of arms not authorized by the Government of Lebanon is a clear violation of the obligations set out by the Security Council.

My country welcomes the fact that the Lebanese armed forces began to deploy in the south of the

country following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some sectors. The priority for the forthcoming days will be to keep up and intensify that dynamic so as to attain the objective set out in paragraph 2 of the resolution: that all Israeli forces should withdraw from southern Lebanon and that the Government of Lebanon should fully fulfil its responsibilities between the Litani river and the Blue Line.

The assistance of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in that process is essential. We are grateful to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for its efforts in recent weeks to accelerate the deployment of additional troops. We hope that after the circulation of the draft rules of engagement and concept of operations of UNIFIL it will be possible to ensure that substantive contributions to the force are made.

We should also continue to work to achieve the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hizbollah and to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of the Lebanese prisoners.

Looking beyond those issues, it is essential to establish foundations for a lasting solution to this conflict on the basis of the principles mentioned in resolution 1701 (2006), in particular with regard to the disarmament of Hizbollah and other militias, compliance with the arms embargo and resolving the outstanding territorial problems, especially in respect to the Sheba'a Farms. In this connection, we support the mission undertaken by Mr. Nambiar and Mr. Roed-Larsen and look forward to having a comprehensive report by mid-September.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in Lebanon, we express our appreciation for the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the humanitarian agencies. In the current circumstances the priority is to secure access to the affected population in southern Lebanon and to assist persons who are returning to their homes. The presence of a great number of unexploded munitions creates an additional challenge for these activities.

In relation to the aforementioned, it is essential that Israel lift the maritime and aerial blockades and suspend the restrictions imposed on the Lebanese land crossings. The Lebanese authorities, for their part, should assume their responsibilities with a view to ensuring that the lifting of those restrictions does not affect the implementation of paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006).

The tragic events during the last month between Lebanon and Israel should not distract us from what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Argentina is extremely concerned by the humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people and by the death of innocent civilians as a result of the violence and the Israeli excessive use of force and Palestinian extremist activities.

We continue to attach importance to the immediate and unconditional liberation of the Israeli soldier and to the fulfilment by the Government of the Palestinian Authority of the principles set out by the Quartet. Likewise, we believe that Israel should immediately and unconditionally release all Palestinian officials and legislators, end military activities in Gaza and take urgent measures to contribute to the improvement of the humanitarian situation in that territory. Unilateral Israeli measures in the West Bank must immediately stop, as must any other practices that contravene international law.

The parallel crises in Lebanon and Gaza have demonstrated once again that there is no military solution to this conflict. Only negotiated political solutions will be sustainable in the long term. Argentina will continue to support a just solution to the problems of the Middle East, based on the resolutions of this Security Council, the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

As political, economic and humanitarian pressure on the situation is a source of serious concern. Now more than ever before, joint efforts by the international community are needed to prevent an escalation and to establish appropriate conditions for progress in the political settlement process in the region.

Over several weeks, the Security Council strained hard to find a way out of the Lebanese-Israeli crisis. The outcome of that intense activity was the unanimous adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), which if properly implemented would, beyond the Lebanese dimension, have great significance in reducing tensions in the entire Middle East region.

We are generally satisfied with how the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) is proceeding. The Lebanese army is gradually taking control of territory in the south of the country, while the Israeli army is withdrawing from areas it had occupied. The main task now is not to allow any disruption of this process, to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is maintained and becomes a lasting ceasefire, and to prevent attempts to undermine agreements that were so difficult to achieve.

While working to enhance positive developments in the Lebanese-Israeli settlement, we must not lose sight of what is taking place in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The situation in the Palestinian territories continues to be extremely unstable. Israel has not ended its use of force in Palestinian Authority areas, and this has led to an increasing number of victims among the civilian population. What is also destabilizing the situation is the practice of arresting heads of Palestinian self-governing bodies and members of the legislative body, which is leading to paralysis in the work of the autonomous governing structures.

Such developments once again confirm that it is impossible to fully resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict if a solution cannot be found to its root cause — the Palestinian problem. In the absence of such, the Security Council will continue to deal with chronic Middle East conflicts and to react to new challenges that constantly arise in the region. Therefore it is necessary to resume as soon as possible the Palestinian-Israeli political dialogue, which should aim at finding a constructive solution to all existing problems in relations between the parties.

Russia, through its contacts with the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, members of the Quartet of international mediators, countries of the region and the League of Arab States, continues actively to support effective, collective efforts by the international community to achieve lasting progress on a Middle East settlement in all its dimensions and on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the provisions of the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I, too, would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

It has been 11 days since the passage of resolution 1701 (2006). We believe this resolution is an important step forward and, when fully implemented, that it will help lay the foundation for lasting peace in the region. The United States is now actively engaged with others to turn this opportunity into a reality.

The United States takes seriously the imperative of fully implementing resolution 1701 (2006), starting with its call to take immediate steps to extend financial and humanitarian assistance to the people of Lebanon. The United States has pledged $50 million in humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, over half of which has already been distributed. As President Bush announced yesterday, we will increase this humanitarian and reconstruction aid to more than $230 million in the weeks ahead. The President has also announced his intention to work with Congress to extend the availability of loan guarantees to help rebuild Israeli infrastructure damaged by Hizbollah's rockets.

In addition to alleviating the humanitarian problem in southern Lebanon, it is imperative that we move as quickly as possible to secure the peace by enhancing the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and providing robust rules of engagement. We urge potential troop-contributing countries to expedite their internal decision-making processes as we strive to reach our goal of an expanded 15,000-member international force. Delay in this case does not serve the interests of anyone, except of those who oppose a sovereign, free and democratic Lebanon, one which is no longer used as a base to launch terrorist attacks against Israel, killing its innocent civilians.

As we plan for this deployment, we should be encouraged that, broadly speaking, one of the important goals of resolution 1701 (2006) has been achieved — a cessation of hostilities. We are concerned, of course, by reports of sporadic violence, but we stress that resolution 1701 (2006) guarantees Israel's right to defend itself and its forces.

Israel has said that the operation in the Bekaa Valley this past weekend was targeted against arms shipments to Hizbollah from Iran and Syria. Such arms shipments are, of course, legally prohibited by the arms embargo established by resolution 1701 (2006) unless specifically authorized by the Government of Lebanon. All States must comply with their obligations to

observe it. Failure to strictly observe that embargo will significantly enhance the risk of future hostilities. The burden of abiding by the arms embargo, and the attention of the world, fall especially on Syria and Iran.

But resolution 1701 (2006) is not just about a cessation of hostilities. It correctly emphasizes not only the need for an end to violence but the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers. It is impossible — indeed, dangerous — to divorce the two issues. If the international community applies only a temporary band-aid solution to the problem and allows Hizbollah to regroup and rearm, then the suffering of the people of Lebanon and Israel may very well intensify in the near future.

We must keep in mind that responsibility for this conflict rests squarely on the shoulders of Hizbollah. As President Bush stated unequivocally last week, it was an unprovoked attack by Hizbollah on Israel that started this conflict. Hizbollah terrorists targeted Israeli civilians with daily rocket attacks. Hizbollah terrorists used Lebanese civilians as human shields, sacrificing the innocent in an effort to protect themselves from Israeli response.

If we are to achieve the goal of lasting peace in the region, we must put an end to Hizbollah's operating as a State within a State. To do that requires that we address the backing of Hizbollah by Damascus and Tehran. Their continued support to Hizbollah in the form of financing and training and supplying armaments does not just perpetuate this crisis, it sustains it. Cutting off those supply lines, as mandated in resolution 1701 (2006), is a matter that can no longer be ignored. The United States calls again upon Iran and Syria to comply immediately with that resolution. The United States remains deeply concerned at the attitude of Syria and Iran in this crisis. The leaders of both States have called for the destruction of Israel in recent days.

We recognize, as President Bush stated last week, that the conflict in Lebanon is part of a broader struggle between freedom and terror that is unfolding across the region. We believe that full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) will lay the foundation on which to achieve a lasting peace and realize the goals outlined originally in resolution 1559 (2004) — a sovereign and democratically elected Government in Lebanon, free from coercion by all outside Governments.

The United States also remains deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, instigated by the 25 June attack by Hamas inside Israel, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed and Corporal Gilad Shalit was kidnapped. The United States is keenly aware of the humanitarian impact of the current crisis, which has been caused by the refusal of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government to govern responsibly. Indeed, the Hamas Government has made a strategic decision to reject peace and to continue to embrace terrorism. In order to ease the hardships faced by the Palestinian people due to the intransigent policies of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government, we have increased humanitarian assistance to more than $270 million, including more than $50 million in response to the emergency appeal by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the West Bank and Gaza. We have also substantially increased our support for the promotion of democracy and civil society and the development of the private sector.

In the days ahead we look forward to the continued implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), but we cannot stress enough the urgent need to move quickly to implement fully the obligations imposed on us in accordance with that resolution. The price of failure in this case is to condemn the people of Lebanon and Israel to further violence and tragedy.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

In the past month the Middle East region has undergone two bloody conflicts. The peoples of Palestine, Lebanon and Israel all incurred heavy and saddening costs. We are deeply distressed and gravely concerned at this. With the concerted effort of the international community, the Security Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006) on this issue on 11 August, requiring parties to the Lebanese-Israeli conflict to cease hostilities in a comprehensive manner.

In the past week both Lebanon and Israel basically abided by their ceasefire commitments. We should say that this is a victory of diplomatic efforts. We hope that the Lebanese and Israeli parties will both earnestly honour their commitments, demonstrate the

greatest good will and do their utmost to implement resolution 1701 (2006).

The adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) opens a new chapter in the settlement of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict. Whether the current peaceful situation can be consolidated depends on the political will and efforts of the parties concerned. The next few weeks will be critical. We believe the top priorities for the international community lies in the following four areas.

First, the Lebanese Government must be helped to exercise effective control over its entire territory. To that end, the capacity and role of the Government's forces should be strengthened so that they can truly shoulder the responsibility for maintaining peace and security in Lebanon.

Second, the expansion of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) must be stepped up. Countries in a position to do so should swiftly contribute troops to ensure UNIFIL's early deployment.

Third, humanitarian assistance to Lebanon must be increased. Parties to the conflict should cooperate with the efforts of the international community, including ensuring safety in the humanitarian corridor. Israel should also lift the various blockades imposed on Lebanon as soon as possible.

Fourth, Lebanon should be helped to undertake post-war recovery and reconstruction. Currently the country is a scene of devastation and suffering, with everything screaming to be rebuilt. The international community should extend a helping hand so that Lebanon can re-emerge from the rubble of war.

While paying attention to the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, we should not forget the suffering of the Palestinian people. We are deeply concerned over the steadily deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Once again we urge all parties concerned to abide strictly by international humanitarian law, avoid harming innocent civilians and assist and facilitate the humanitarian relief activities of the international community.

Both Israel and Palestine should create conditions for political settlements. The Israeli side should release the democratically elected Government officials of Palestine at an early date, while the Palestinian side should take measures and work towards an early release of the abducted Israeli soldiers.

The question of Palestine has always been at the centre of the Middle East issue. Without success and reasonable settlement of the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people, tension in the Middle East cannot be eased at its roots and genuine peace will not be realized. We hope that with the joint efforts of Israel and the Arab countries, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and on the principle of land for peace, the Middle East peace process can be revitalized and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace will be achieved in the region soon.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing and to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670).

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

On Lebanon, the objectives of resolution 1701 (2006) are clear: to bring about a full cessation of hostilities, to create the space for an urgent humanitarian relief effort, and to begin a process leading to a permanent ceasefire and lasting peace.

The United Kingdom welcomes the progress already made towards achieving those objectives. The cessation of hostilities has largely held. The Secretary-General reports that this has greatly improved the frequency and quantity of humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, and we underline our full support for his efforts to secure the political agreement necessary for a long-term solution, including through the current visit to the region by Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar.

The progress in planning for the enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deployment is encouraging. The priority now is to give UNIFIL the resources to do its new job and to turn the many welcome offers to contribute into forces on the ground, as some have already done. The United Kingdom has already made a firm offer of air and naval assets and stands ready to deploy them quickly if the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) takes up our offer.

But recent events have underlined the fragility of the cessation of hostilities and the need for both sides

and others in the region to avoid any action which could undermine it. It is also clear that the humanitarian effort faces serious challenges, not least in securing access to all those parts of Lebanon affected by the conflict. In that context, we support the Secretary-General's call for the air and sea blockade on Lebanon to be lifted as soon as possible.

No one should underestimate the difficulties inherent in securing political agreement on issues where the two sides have such divergent views. In this context, it will be important to find arrangements that facilitate direct contacts between the two Governments.

However, the progress reported by the Secretary-General is grounds for cautious optimism. It also reminds us why it was right to work for a resolution that had a realistic chance of making an immediate impact on the ground and that also looked beyond the short term and held out the prospect of a lasting solution. At the heart of that lasting solution, and at the heart of resolution 1701 (2006), is the need to pursue the twin objectives of Lebanese sovereignty and Israeli security. We need to achieve both if we are to deliver a lasting peace. That is why the Council unanimously adopted a resolution setting out a framework for re-establishing peace, security and stability in southern Lebanon on the basis of extending the Government of Lebanon's control throughout its territory, and in particular through implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006).

To achieve that, we look first and foremost to all the parties to respect the terms of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). But we also look to others with influence to play their part. This includes Syria and Iran. A key provision of resolution 1701 (2006) is the requirement to ensure an end to all arms shipments into Lebanon other than those destined for its sovereign Government. The attitude of Syria and Iran, as well as that of others in the region, will be central to our success in implementing this and other provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

We have also heard today about the continuing crisis in Gaza. During the past month, the focus of the Council and of the international community has, inevitably, been mainly on Lebanon, but today's briefing reminds us that the suffering of those caught up in this conflict has not been any less simply because the focus of our attention may, understandably, have been elsewhere. We continue to be deeply concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Gaza. The United Kingdom has just announced a £3 million contribution to the temporary international mechanism.

But, more generally, it is vitally important that all sides act to de-escalate this conflict and create the space for negotiations to resume. In particular, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of Corporal Shalit and an end to the firing of rockets into Israel. We underline the need, on the other hand, for Israel to act in accordance with international law and to protect civilians. Those members of the Palestinian legislature detained in Israel should be either released or charged and accorded due legal process. We are particularly concerned about the kidnapping of the New Zealand and United States journalists and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Under-Secretary-General Gambari's briefing is also a reminder that real peace in the region, and, indeed, real sovereignty for Lebanon and real security for Israel can be achieved only on the basis of a lasting, comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. There is no military solution to these problems; negotiation is the only viable way to bring peace and prosperity to peoples throughout the Middle East. The Middle East remains a top foreign policy priority for the United Kingdom. Our Prime Minister is committed to doing what we can to help re-energize that process and plans to visit the region soon.

Our priorities in the medium term will rightly be Lebanon and Gaza. But ultimately, however, those issues cannot be solved independently of a solution to the broader problems in the region. But nor should progress in those two areas be held hostage to the overall objective. It is therefore vital that we work in parallel to resolve specific issues as soon as we can and, more broadly, to re-energize the Middle East peace process and create the conditions for an early resumption of negotiations based on the Quartet road map.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his thorough briefing.

Denmark aligns itself with the statement to be given shortly by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Denmark is pleased to note that the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah by and large seems to be holding, that the Israel Defense Forces has initiated its withdrawal, and that contacts are ongoing between the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese armed forces on the schedule for the withdrawal of the remaining forces.

The situation is, however, still extremely fragile, as evidenced by the incident that took place this past weekend. Denmark calls on all parties to show the utmost restraint and to refrain from any action which could undermine the current ceasefire.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and to give it the capacity to implement the full mandate contained in resolution 1701 (2006), including enforcement of the arms embargo. As already announced, Denmark is, for its part — pending parliamentary approval — ready to support the naval component of an enhanced UNIFIL. Now that the outstanding issues concerning the rules of engagement and the concept of operations seem to have been cleared up, additional Member States will, hopefully, be able to provide similar specific pledges.

There is also a need to assist the Government of Lebanon through capacity-building and the provision of materiel to exercise its authority throughout its territory, not least to secure its borders and prevent the illicit delivery of weapons.

Denmark welcomes the urgency and diligence with which the Secretary-General has approached the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). It particularly welcomes the timely decision to dispatch Special Envoys Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen and Mr. Vijay Nambiar to the region in order to help facilitate negotiations on the political conditions for a lasting ceasefire, which would require, among other factors, the disbandment and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as stipulated in resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). We look forward to receiving their proposals on implementing resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including proposals to settle the disputed border areas, such as the Sheba'a farms. There is also an urgent need to find a solution to the question of the abducted Israel soldiers and the Lebanese prisoners in Israel.

All Member States must actively back these efforts by the Secretary-General and his envoys through their own channels. As stressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark in the Security Council on 11 August (see S/PV.5511), Denmark pledges its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in this regard and stands ready to assist wherever possible.

In spite of the ceasefire, the humanitarian situation in Lebanon is still disturbing. It is of paramount importance that the Government of Lebanon receive support. The Government of Lebanon urgently needs the capacity to be the lead player in humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts. The Danish Government has already disbursed $4 million in support through bilateral and multilateral agencies. Danish experts have been seconded to United Nations agencies, and a Danish team is part of the general effort to clean up after the huge oil spill along the Lebanese coast.

We look forward to the donors conference in Stockholm next week where we expect United Nations agencies to be able to present revised plans. Substantial amounts have already been committed. It is important that both donors and agencies demonstrate flexibility so that the new efforts can be geared towards the real needs on the ground.

In addition to Lebanon, Denmark is particularly concerned about the situation between Israel and the Palestinian territories, in particular, in the Gaza Strip. There remain ongoing hostilities, the humanitarian situation is deeply worrying and the economy is almost completely broken down. Also, the political situation continues to deteriorate. I think that it is obvious that the long-term negative consequences for the territories as well as for the Middle East as a whole could be far more serious if we do not find a solution to all aspects of this crisis as soon as possible.

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of Corporal Gilad Shalit of the Israel Defense Forces and urge the Palestinian leadership to undertake all necessary efforts in this regard and to stop the firing of rockets into Israel.

We are also concerned about the detention of elected members of the Palestinian Government and legislature. This issue should be resolved without delay. We call on Israel to exercise restraint. Israel must ensure that its response is proportional and measured and carried out with full respect for a State's

obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in time of war.

Whether in Lebanon or in the Palestinian territories, all parties must do their utmost to avoid escalating the situation. The parties have to be ready to make concessions and to act responsibly and with a sense of proportion. Additional violence will only serve to promote the agendas of extremists. Only by returning to peaceful negotiations can we hope to reach a comprehensive political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has already generated so much suffering and hatred in the region.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement that will be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I would like to commend Mr. Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing and welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670). France welcomes the determined action by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to ensure the full implementation of that resolution.

With regard to the situation in Lebanon, France is happy to note the first positive effects of resolution 1701 (2006). The cessation of hostilities has now entered, as of yesterday, its second week. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report, the two parties have generally respected the agreed time of Monday, 14 August, for the cessation of hostilities.

The Israeli military operation in the Bekaa valley last Saturday was a source of considerable concern for us. France calls on all parties to demonstrate the utmost restraint and to respect the obligations incumbent upon them under the terms of resolution 1701 (2006). It calls upon them to continue and to complete, as soon as possible, the process of the parallel deployment of the Lebanese army and the withdrawal of the Israeli army. The extension of the authority of the Lebanese Government into the south is indeed a historic decision which is to be welcomed and supported.

Now, the international community must strive to ensure the achievement of several objectives: the unconditional freeing of the Israeli prisoners; the settlement of the sensitive issue of the Lebanese detainees in Israel; the immediate return of displaced persons to their homes and access by civilian populations to humanitarian aid; the lifting of the blockade against Lebanon; the respect by all of the embargo on illegal arms; and the reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) which must be diversified and made more robust so that it can safely accomplish its missions.

France is making every effort through its contacts with all the parties concerned to achieve, on the basis of resolution 1701 (2006), a long-term solution to the crisis in order to enhance the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as well as the security of Israel.

With regard to the Palestinian territories, France continues to be extremely concerned by the continuously worsening security situation and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. While the international community's attention has been focused since mid-July on the Lebanese crisis, France considers that the international community should renew its involvement in the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continues to be a major source of instability and frustration in the region.

Of course, action by the international community cannot be a substitute for determined measures by the parties themselves, and those parties must respect their obligations. The Palestinian Authority must immediately take every necessary measure to put an end to the firing of rockets and other acts of violence against Israel and its citizens and to work for the freeing of the kidnapped Israeli soldier. The Palestinian Authority must also struggle, more than ever and with the greatest determination, against terrorism. We expect that the Hamas-led Government should finally respect the three principles established by the Quartet: to renounce violence, to recognize Israel and to accept prior agreements. We reaffirm our support for President Abbas and for all his efforts to strengthen the Palestinian national consensus on the basis of the objectives that he has been defending since his election to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority.

Israel, for its part, must end its disproportionate military operations against Palestinian towns and refugee camps. Those operations have, over the past few weeks, taken a very heavy toll in human terms, particularly among civilians, and in terms of considerable damage inflicted on basic infrastructure and vital equipment, as well as on the institutions of the Palestinian Authority.

In general terms, it is important that Israel refrain from any measures that might undermine the Palestinian Authority as an institution and as a future negotiating partner. The recent arrests of the President and the Secretary General of the parliament, as well as of the Deputy Prime Minister, are, in this respect, counterproductive. We once again call upon Israel to free the members of the Government and the Legislative Council and other Palestinian political leaders whom it has imprisoned.

At this critical juncture for the Middle East, it is essential that the international community work in a determined way to relaunch the peace process. That will require the updating the road map, in cooperation with the regional parties concerned. The goal must be to ensure that there is a negotiated political solution leading to the creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel.

In this respect, France continues to be extremely concerned about the continuing settlement process and the building of the separation barrier within occupied Palestinian territory. Both of those actions compromise the geographic, economic and political viability of the future State of Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to recall something that should be obvious to all: there is no military solution to the conflicts in the Middle East. The deadly conflicts that we have recently witnessed in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip can lead only to further destruction, greater hatred and increased radicalism. Only dialogue and negotiation can enable the people of that region to realize their legitimate aspirations for peace, prosperity and security.

Diplomatic efforts are now under way by the Secretary-General and a certain number of countries that are in a position to facilitate the achievement of a lasting solution to those two crises, which is essential for the future of the region. France will continue to work tirelessly for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement that is based on Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President: I would like to note that Ambassador Duclos is making his last appearance in the Security Council in his capacity as Deputy Permanent Representative of France. I understand that he is leaving for another important posting. On behalf of the Council, I would like to express our gratitude to him for his cooperation and for his positive contribution to the work of the Council. I am confident that he will use the knowledge and experience acquired in the course of his work here in discharging his new responsibilities. We wish him well.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): I would like to join colleagues in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

In the past month, we have again witnessed widespread, deeply troubling changes in the Middle East. It is urgently necessary to create conditions for a cessation of violence that will be sustainable and to lay the foundations for a permanent solution to the problems there.

With regard to the situation in Lebanon and Israel, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 1701 (2006), has effected a cessation of hostilities and created the political framework for a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the problems. In general, the parties concerned have honoured the terms of the resolution in that regard. There have also been some encouraging steps towards the expansion of the authority of the Lebanese Government over all of its territory in this first week after the resolution was adopted. These include the withdrawal of the Israeli army from some of the positions inside Lebanese territory and the start of the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces. However, the situation remains extremely fragile, as was demonstrated by the Israeli military operation in eastern Lebanon on Saturday, 19 August.

Japan continues to call upon both parties to exercise maximum restraint and to do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and that it becomes a durable ceasefire. We support the proposals and observations made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/670) to that end. We attach particular importance to three of them.

First, in order to ensure the early deployment of the reinforced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Japan strongly hopes that Member States in a position to do so will immediately make contributions. Secondly, with respect to the humanitarian and reconstruction activities that are needed to stabilize the situation, we greatly appreciate the commitment and dedication that the relevant United Nations and other organizations have shown in difficult circumstances.

Japan, for its part, is giving consideration to providing assistance to Lebanon so as to contribute to the best of its ability to promoting stability there and in the region as a whole.

Thirdly, on the subject of the political process, Japan strongly urges the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to arrive at an agreement, as stipulated in the resolution. We also request the Secretariat to draw on its collective wisdom to present a realistic implementation plan in the next report of the Secretary-General, which is scheduled to be released in September. We expect that the United Nations delegation, comprising Mr. Nambiar and Mr. Roed-Larsen among others, will play an important role in this regard.

Japan is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of conditions in Palestine — the central issue in the Middle East — in particular since the abduction of Israeli soldiers about two months ago. Japan calls on Israel to exercise the utmost restraint and to seek to avoid casualties among innocent civilians and damage to civilian infrastructure.

We also urge that a number of steps be taken as a matter of the highest priority. First, Israeli soldiers held in Gaza and Lebanon should be returned unharmed. Secondly, terrorist attacks against Israel must cease. Thirdly, Israel should end its military operations and its forces should withdraw from Gaza as an early date. Fourthly, the detained Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians should be released.

Japan has strong hopes for the early resolution of these matters, which are of the highest priority, following the resumption of cooperation with regard to security and cultural engagement, both among Palestinians and with Israel. To that end, it is more necessary than ever that the Palestinian Authority, Cabinet, led by Hamas, engage in the peace process through peaceful means based on existing international agreements and obligations.

Furthermore, it is of vital importance that leaders in the region and the international community continue actively to engage in diplomatic efforts. Japan, for its part, has conveyed to both parties on several occasions its firm belief that there is no alternative but to work together towards coexistence and mutual prosperity. We have, therefore, called for Israel to exercise the maximum restraint and for President Abbas to provide the necessary leadership so that these goals can be achieved.

Japan is also very concerned at the heavy toll in innocent civilian lives in Palestine and Israel and at the extreme deterioration of the humanitarian situation of Palestinians. We believe it is essential that the international community, including Israel, continue to provide humanitarian assistance. I should like to note that Prime Minister Koizumi, during his visit to the region in July, expressed his support for President Abbas and announced his decision to extend a total of $25 million to help the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to participate actively in the discussions in the Security Council, while also pursuing its own diplomatic efforts, in cooperation with all concerned countries in the region, with a view to defusing the crisis and restoring calm and stability to the region.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Like other speakers, I wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, for his thorough briefing today.

As Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, I shall be brief.

Over approximately the past two months, we all became witnesses to an incredible tragedy in the Middle East — one with severe repercussions not only for Lebanon, but for the entire region. With the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council took a bold and ambitious step not only to ensure that there would be a full cessation of hostilities between the warring parties, but also, at the same time, to provide a sound framework for the achievement of a political solution. That solution would form the basis for a lasting ceasefire and, eventually, for a lasting solution to the problems underlying the current conflict in Lebanon.

In that context and owing to the complexities of the several issues at hand, it is understandable that negotiations within the Council took longer than many of us would have preferred. This crisis, however, forced all members of the Council, and the international community as a whole, to revisit and re-examine in detail the dynamics at play in this troubled region.

During the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), a number of representatives, including Greece's Foreign Minister, stressed the need to reinvigorate and relaunch in earnest the Middle East peace process, in particular with regard to the question of Palestine. As we say in Greece, we cannot hide behind our fingers, that is to say, we cannot continuously ignore and avoid the realities and the truth. The Palestinian question lies at the heart of developments in the region. We must all do our share.

The international community must not lose sight of the plight of the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspiration for statehood. Without a just and viable solution to the Palestinian question, peace in the Middle East will remain as elusive as ever. The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is dire and a cause for grave concern. We fully share the Secretary-General's concerns over the continued killing and injuring of hundreds of civilians, including children, in Gaza by Israeli forces. Likewise, the arbitrary arrest of many senior Palestinians is a cause of particular concern, since it further undermines Palestinian institutions, which must be preserved if a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to be achieved.

The long-term effects of the crisis in Lebanon on the wider region will depend to a large degree on how all the players in the region and the international community react to it and decide how to deal with it, as well as how to handle the entire problem of the Middle East in all its forms, and how to promote long-term solutions. Indeed, the current crisis can be turned into an opportunity — an opportunity for all involved to realize that causes cannot be promoted or achieved through violence and, at the same time, that security cannot be guaranteed by military means alone.

The principles that should form the basis for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region are well known. These include all relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In another bold and ambitious step, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 1515 (2003), endorsed the Quartet's performance-based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and called on the parties to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map with a view to achieving the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. We reiterate that call here today. At the same time, we call on the international community, in particular the Quartet, to remain actively committed and dedicated to assisting the parties in achieving that shared vision. Moreover, we encourage the countries of the region to promote ways to facilitate the resumption of dialogue among all sides and to constructively engage with international partners to that end.

Greece will remain committed to the goal of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace for the Middle East. We must re-energize the peace process as soon as possible. If we want peace to prevail, we must look to the future without recriminations or arbitrary actions, which only take us backwards without hope.

Mrs. Taj (United Republic of Tanzania): We join in thanking the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Gambari, for his briefing on the situation in Palestine. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670).

We welcome the fact that Lebanon has moved troops across the Litani river to the south and that Israel has begun the gradual withdrawal of its forces. We believe that the rapid deployment of a strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will assist in hastening the Israeli withdrawal. We further welcome the announcement by the Lebanese Defence Minister discouraging the firing of rockets at Israel. We join the Secretary-General in warning against such actions and in urging both parties to display responsibility in implementing resolution 1701 (2006), including the utmost respect for the arms embargo.

We note that Hizbollah has supported the resolution and has brought hostilities to an end. Notwithstanding the unfortunate incidents over the weekend, we hope that the ceasefire agreement can be translated into peace on the ground. It is thus imperative to ensure that the ceasefire continues to hold and that its implementation is verified. We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a high-level mission to talk to the parties involved so as to secure full implementation of the resolution. We look forward to a report from that team after the completion of their mission.

We are encouraged by the positive response made by countries willing to contribute to a reinforced UNIFIL by providing both troops and equipment to make it more robust and give it a multilateral character. Indeed, we expect its rapid deployment in southern Lebanon, following clarification of the remaining sensitive issues pertaining to the concept of operations, the rules of engagement and the specific mandate of the new force. Tanzania will continue to render its full support to all efforts towards a lasting ceasefire.

In the humanitarian area, we commend the swift action taken to ensure that assistance reaches those in dire need as soon as possible. To enhance humanitarian operations and as a matter of urgency, the air and sea blockade over Lebanon must be lifted, so as to make available urgently needed items, in particular fuel. We appeal to all those helping returnees to increase their efforts, so as to prevent further human suffering. We have noted with satisfaction that their safety is being taken into account, in particular as regards the handling of unexploded ordnance and land mines.

With regard to the question of Palestine, we are very concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation there and the continued suffering of the Palestinian people, as described by the Under-Secretary-General. Constructive measures must be deployed to resolve the unrest in Gaza. A number of United Nations resolutions and other agreements provide a basis for a just and viable solution to the Middle East conflict, including the question of Palestine. As a long-term strategy, those resolutions should be revisited and implemented, which should include the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territory. The resumption of negotiations based on the Quartet's Road Map is key to a lasting solution.

In the short and immediate term, Hamas and Hizbollah should free the captured Israeli soldiers. For its part, Israel must settle the problem of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in its jails. Israel needs partners, rather than adversaries, to resolve the Middle East conflict. However slow and rocky the road may be, in the end diplomacy is a wiser and cheaper choice than war. The one-month confrontation between Israel and Hizbollah, which has resulted in enormous destruction and loss of life, has proven that point beyond any doubt.

Mr. Perevra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the valuable briefing given by Under-Secretary-General Gambari. Peru is pleased that resolution 1701 (2006), which the Security Council adopted 10 days ago, has been accepted by the Governments of Israel and Lebanon. We trust that the cessation of hostilities will serve as the beginning of the end of the violence that has caused so much death and destruction.

Violations of the cessation of hostilities, such as those described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/670) and the ones committed by Israeli forces on the night of Friday, 18 August, point to the extreme fragility of the situation and to the danger of further crisis. In that connection, we once again reiterate our call on the parties to fully comply with the cessation of hostilities.

Strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is a fundamental element of implementing resolution 1701 (2006). That should take place as quickly as possible, in order that UNIFIL can deploy and fully carry out the mandate entrusted to it and work jointly with the Lebanese army. In that regard, my delegation would like to highlight the work done by the Secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to promote the strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and to do so quickly as possible. We hope that the deployment of forces will take place in accordance with the three phases that have been envisaged.

Without disparaging those efforts, the current situation has once again made it possible to realize how important it is for the United Nations to have reserve forces at its disposal. Peru has repeatedly voiced its support for endowing the Organization with the necessary capacity to respond through forces with a pre-established mandate that have been voluntarily and unconditionally made available to the United Nations by States that agree with the need for them. In other words, the Organization should be able to rely on adequately prepared units that can be deployed immediately.

It is also important that the Governments of Lebanon and Israel consider, as soon as possible, the principles and elements for a definitive solution included in resolution 1701 (2006). In that connection, we are pleased to note that the Secretary-General's envoys Vijay Nambiar and Terje Roed-Larsen are in the region and have initiated contacts at the highest level. We look forward to their impressions upon their

return, as well as to the proposals to be made by the Secretary-General to implement the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), especially as regards disarming Hizbollah and irregular forces that do not recognize the authority of the Lebanese Government and as regards the demarcation of Lebanon's international borders, including the Shebaa farmlands.

The humanitarian situation continues to require great attention. We would like to underscore the efforts made by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies and organizations, which are continuing to do everything they can to bring aid to needy people as soon as possible. The strategy they have adopted towards their work and the basic principles on which they are focusing in these circumstances merit our gratitude and should be resolutely supported.

In that regard, we would like to recall what has been said by Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Margareta Wahlström, namely, that overcoming the humanitarian crisis not only depends upon assistance, but in particular upon the resumption of the economic and productive activities interrupted in Lebanon. That aspect should always be taken into account in the rebuilding effort.

In conclusion, with regard to the situation in Palestine, Peru once again deplores all acts of violence and kidnapping and the loss of human lives. We also deplore the critical situation in which the population of Palestine has to live. In that regard, it must be recalled that the Government of the Palestinian Authority has yet to meet the requirements put forward by the Quartet. A negotiated solution for the peaceful coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living within secure and internationally recognized borders will remain elusive if one of the parties does not recognize the other's right to exist.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

Before I begin, we would like to align ourselves with the statement that will be delivered shortly on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Finland.

Slovakia has followed with great concern the recent developments in the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah, which has led to great suffering for innocent people in both Lebanon and Israel. We have underlined on several occasions that the crisis can be solved only through political and diplomatic means. We therefore welcome the cessation of hostilities and violence and the return to political and diplomatic means to resolve the crisis, although the recent violent incidents of last week have shown that the situation is still very fragile. In that regard, we would like to underline that any violations of resolution 1701 (2006) will aggravate the volatile atmosphere. We therefore call upon all parties to fully respect the resolution, exercise maximum restraint and avoid any actions that could lead to misinterpretation.

It is also important that all parties concerned act in good faith, in the spirit of resolution 1701 (2006), thus allowing the international community to assist with the rapid deployment and reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in order to achieve a long-term resolution of the crisis. We share the concern of the Secretary-General that an escalation of the recent crisis and violence could have dire consequences not only for the countries involved but also for regional and global security.

We have repeatedly condemned terrorist actions and provocations by Hizbollah, which have led to the current crisis. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our firm belief that there can be no military solution to the Middle East conflict, the only way to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement is through peaceful negotiations and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions and of the principles defined by the Quartet in the road map.

While we recognize the right of Israel to self-defence against terrorism and its perpetrators, we would like to underscore that it is important to exercise that right with utmost caution and restraint and to do everything possible to avoid the loss of innocent lives, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and increased suffering by the civilian population. In that regard, we are particularly concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Lebanon and the exodus of Lebanese people, caused by Israel's military action.

We highly appreciate the work of UNIFIL, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations agencies, which strive, often under very difficult and dangerous circumstances, to help

alleviate the human suffering of the increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees.

We support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. We believe that these can best be achieved through the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006). We are convinced that it now crucial to develop a plan for the full implementation of those two resolutions, and especially for helping the Government of Lebanon to assume full control over the whole territory of the country and to disarm all militias, which in our opinion is key to achieving a lasting and sustainable solution and is an important precondition for the stabilization and continuation of democratic processes in Lebanon. It is also very important to take appropriate measures against the illegal movement of arms and people across the borders of Lebanon and against hostile attacks against the territory of neighbouring States.

The international community should assist the Lebanese Government to achieve those goals. In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to take all steps to expeditiously enhance the strength and mandate of UNIFIL so that it can cope effectively with the tasks envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006).

Last but not least, as is also reflected in resolution 1701 (2006), we should not forget about the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including through the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and, mindful of the sensitivity of the issue of prisoners, by encouraging efforts aimed at urgently settling the issue of the Lebanese citizens detained in Israel.

We would like to underscore that the restoration of calm in Lebanon is also an important step towards revitalizing the peace process in the Middle East region as a whole. In that regard, we are concerned at the deteriorating situation between Israel and the Palestinians and at the increasing number of civilian casualties on both sides as a result of hostilities and terrorist actions. We think that the Palestinian Government led by Hamas has missed an important opportunity to advance the peace process through its continued refusal to accept three principles defined by the Quartet as a precondition for becoming a reliable partner in the peace talks. We hope that President Abbas will be successful in his efforts to create appropriate support among the Palestinian people for the objectives of the road map. We think that the international community should provide him with its full support in that endeavour, including by addressing urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population through the Temporary International Mechanism administered by the European Union.

In that context, we urge Israel to resume the transfer of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. Israel should also release the Palestinian officials and should refrain from a disproportionate and excessive use of force. At the same time, we recognize the right to fight terrorism and organized crime.

Finally, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, and negotiations leading to implementation of the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Slovakia, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, will continue to do its utmost to contribute constructively to a diplomatic solution to the ongoing tragic conflict in the region of the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the great efforts he is making to contain the very grave situation in the Middle East, in the context of the fragile ceasefire in Lebanon provided by resolution 1701 (2006) on the one hand, and of the continuous escalation of military operations in Palestine and their serious repercussions for international peace and security on the other. I wish also to thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his important briefing on the events that have been unfolding in the region.

The other day, we reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670) and warned against the danger of sliding once more into war less than nine days after the ceasefire went into effect. Recent Israeli breaches of the ceasefire, which began with the military land operation last Saturday, and the continuous Israeli air force sorties over Lebanese territory are putting the will and credibility of the international community to the test. Such operations have been occurring intermittently since last Saturday.

These developments overshadow the encouraging signs that followed the beginning of compliance with

the cessation of hostilities. It saddens us that these violations are taking place as the international community is making a concerted effort to ensure a lasting cessation of hostilities, to provide humanitarian assistance to the targeted population and to returnees, and to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by this asymmetrical war. In that regard, we cannot fail to state that the ongoing air and sea blockade imposed by Israel against Lebanon impedes efforts by humanitarian agencies to deliver supplies to those who are sorely in need of them. In that light, we call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibility by obliging Israel to immediately lift the blockade imposed against Lebanon. We also call for reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) by increasing its numbers and equipment to enable it to play the role assigned to it, because this is a vital element in the process of implementing resolution 1701 (2006).

While we applaud Lebanon's commitment to begin the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by deploying its armed forces in the south, we are gravely concerned at Israel's deliberate violation of the provisions of the resolution. This obstructs the international community's efforts to establish regional peace and security and to rebuild Lebanon. In spite of that, we still believe in the Security Council's ability to preserve the delicate relative calm and to play an effective and essential role. We will work with all peace-loving States to continue to address this issue, in pursuit of security and stability in Lebanon and throughout the region.

As we seek a permanent solution to the situation in Lebanon, we must not lose sight of the events taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories — the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East — including the escalation of military operations and the detention and kidnapping campaigns, whose targets have included members of the Government and of the legislature who were elected by the Palestinian people. This is a blatant violation of international law, agreements between the two sides and other instruments and norms, and it shows disregard for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

It has repeatedly been made clear that the only way to put an end to violence in the Middle East region is through finding a permanent, comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine. The failure to deal objectively and effectively with this crisis and its root causes has led to a great many disturbances and tension in the region, which manifested themselves in the events in Lebanon and those that we are witnessing today in Gaza.

Believing in peace as the sole option, the Arab States intend to resubmit the question of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Security Council next September. It is our hope that this will lead to finding a permanent, comprehensive solution on all tracks, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, which affirm that the only solution that can end the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence is that of ending Israel's occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I am grateful to you for giving the Council once again an opportunity to examine the situation in the Middle East, 11 days after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006).

A review of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) for the period 11 to 17 August 2006 (S/2006/670) shows genuine cause for hope, overshadowed, unfortunately, by recent developments in the field — notably, serious violations of the cessation of hostilities that was decided on 14 August.

While thanking Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his report on the prevailing situation in the field, we cannot fail to consider the magnitude of the tasks that remain to be undertaken, not only by the actors but also by the international community.

As everyone knows, the delicate balance achieved in resolution 1701 (2006) is fragile. The implementation of this important document requires the full cooperation of all parties if the elements are to be applied in order to establish a new type of relationship between Israel and its neighbours, one based on mutual respect, integrity and the sovereignty of each.

We condemn any violation of the cessation of hostilities, from any quarter, because the logic of force is not only contrary to the principles of international law, but also, more to the point, it has revealed its limitations. Whether we consider military activities attributed to Hizbollah — which have reached a critical point likely to drag the Lebanese State into the maelstrom of an undeclared war with the Israeli State

and as an indirect consequence set the entire region on fire through a build up of alliances that could follow — or whether we consider the Israeli tendency to mistake effects for causes in a war already rooted in Palestinian territory, the solution cannot be found in the logic of confrontation and exclusion.

The cycle of violence has reached a critical threshold with, on the one hand, the sophistication of the arms used by the militias — which not only reduces the chances of the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) but also makes Israeli territory far more vulnerable than before — and, on the other hand, the risky strategy of targeted assassinations and the kidnapping of high officials in the Palestinian Government, with the recent cases of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Legislative Council. Paradoxically, that reminds us of the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, an operation that we condemned at the time while asking that the victims be released.

In our view, the systematic weakening of the Palestinian Authority does not in any way serve the objectives of the peace and stability of the region. More than ever, the prerogatives of the Palestinian Authority need to be restored so that it can play the role we expect in the process of implementing the road map, particularly taking into account the principle of land for peace, with the resolute support of the Quartet, the cooperation of regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, and the full engagement of the United Nations.

Certainly the surprise attack on 19 August by an Israeli commando against Hizbollah positions in the Bekaa valley — apparently to prevent the resupply of weapons — shows, if it was necessary, both the precariousness of the situation and how urgent it is to deploy a strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It also points to the need to assist the Lebanese army in order to facilitate its deployment in the south and in all sectors from which Israeli forces have withdrawn or are in the process of withdrawing. The successful deployment of the Lebanese army is one of the keys to stabilization of the situation at the Israeli-Lebanese border, one of the most sensitive theatres of operation of the Middle East. Thus, we cannot but encourage the effective deployment, in keeping with the commitments undertaken by all parties.

What is more, the fragility of the situation and the risk of things getting out of control, with incalculable consequences, necessitate the rapid deployment of a strengthened UNIFIL. It must have a clearly defined mandate so that troop-contributing countries will be able to make the necessary arrangements in full knowledge of the facts.

In a context of generalized precariousness, such as that we deplore today, the efforts carried out by the humanitarian workers to assist the wounded populations and to restore the destroyed Lebanese infrastructure deserve our recognition and our support. This is an occasion to express thanks for all forms of aid already granted or pledged by the partners of Lebanon.

As regards Africa, we have always expressed our active sympathy for many Lebanese families, who have always been welcome and have found hospitality on our continent, allowing many to recover, socially and economically, from the traumas they endured.

The fragile situation leads us to echo the Secretary-General's appeal for all parties scrupulously to respect the cessation of hostilities and for a durable ceasefire to finally be negotiated and established. We also appeal to countries having an influence on the actors in the conflict to energetically exercise that influence in order to consolidate the process under way and promote a lasting peace between Israel, its Arab neighbours and all the peoples in the region.

The limits of force have been sufficiently demonstrated so that henceforth the parties can show more interest in the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and in initiating on a definitive settlement of the Middle East crisis on the basis of the relevant proposals already made. The ultimate objective would be the consolidation of the national institutions of the Palestinian people living in harmony with the Israeli people.

The Security Council should grasp this opportunity to accelerate the march of history in that part of the world. That is how it can credibly endorse the true aspirations of all for durable peace and security.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ghana.

At the outset, let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing.